

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RELIEF CAMP STRIKERS

WHO USES FORCE AND VIOLENCE?

The Trek of the Relief Camp Workers across Canada and On-to-Ottawa was a matter of interest both casual and enthusiastic to the citizens of Regina. Many of the people of this city, however; were not aware of its true meaning and its causes and what the intentions of its leaders were before it arrived here on that historic morning—fifty box cars transporting 1650 young men, the wreckage of our present society—packed like cattle—transported like livestock on a cattle train, 120 tons of unwanted humanity.

We saw them climbing from the train, dusty and dishevelled, forming into close military formation, marching in a body to the accomodation which had been supplied by the Provincial Government. There at the Stadium and elsewhere—at mass meetings—we saw them, ragged to be sure, but nevertheless manly and straightforward. We saw them on the straw at the Stadium listening attentively to speakers of all shades of opinion. We saw them marching down our streets with never an attempt to be unruly. Many of the citizens feared that they would riot, but they did not do so. They conducted themselves without detriment to anyone.

Their only demand was that they be permitted a hearing, be given an opportunity to negotiate with the representatives of the Canadian people, the Premier and his Cabinet at Ottawa. As a matter of fact they had no intention of staying in Regina and were anxious to be on their way. They had been told that Ottawa was the only place for them to seek redress. But at Regina the Ottawa Government made an unofficial proffer of negotiation and placed a blockade on further freight transportation.

NEGOTIATIONS

Two Cabinet Ministers, Mannon and Weir rushed to Regina and conferred with representatives of the Relief Camp Workers' Union. A truce was agreed upon by both the Government and the strikers, namely: that during the time when the delegation of six appointed by the strike body was absent negotiating with the Government, until such time as the delegation returned and had the democratic decision of the strike army on the proposals of the Government, there would be no offensive on either side.

At Ottawa the delegation got a curt hearing. They were allowed a very brief time to present their case. The Prime Minister rather spent most of the time insulting the representatives of the camp strikers. He then proved his impotence and obstinacy very definitely by cutting the delegation short with not the tiniest concession.

LUMSDEN'S OPEN AIR PENITENTIARY

It was obvious that the acceptance of this delegation was only a ruse to gain time on the part of the Government. It appeared

that while the delegation was on its way down, the Dominion Government was preparing another means of handling the strikers. Following the first agreement made by Manion and Weir in the name of Ottawa, a concentration camp near Lumsden had been prepared with police guards, barbed wire (which was later removed for public inspection.) They had concentrated extra police forces in the city to intimidate the strikers into the camp. Rumours were abroad that many strikers had entered the camp almost immediately upon the invitation of the Government. Since that time we have learned, however, that none registered from the regular strike army. The original body brought from Dundurn to build the camp and pick-ups by the police on the street, were the only recruits to Lumsden's open air penitentiary.

In the face of all this—the breaking of the original agreement to wait for the return of the delegation—the erection of the camp—the extra bodies of police—the cutting off of relief and even to the petty detail of refusing to supply straw for bedding—the campers maintained a stern front, paid for their own meals out of strike funds and continued a sincere endeavor to negotiate with the Provincial Government for some way out of the difficulty. At the same time as the cutting off of relief by the Government and the institution of a move to force the boys into Lumsden Camp, the famous Emergency Order-In-Council was given much publicity, forbidding anyone to help the strikers out of town by truck or any other means. In this instance the strikers again showed remarkable restraint. Unable to go on the train they endeavored to go by truck and pay the gas, oil and other expenses. This was the second time they had avoided trouble but here again they were balked. The first truck that was sent out was stopped by the police. Some of its occupants, both strikers and citizens, were arrested. Among them there was the courageous Rev. East who refused to be frightened by the threatening attitude of the authorities and stayed with the boys whose cause he had espoused.

THE MEETING AND THE RIOT

On Monday, July 1st, there was only sufficient money in the strikers' treasury to buy one meal. They went hungry the rest of the day. As was their practice since arrival, a mass meeting was advertised for that night on the Market Square. The main body of the strikers remained in the Stadium. About three hundred were down town, went to the meeting in company with several thousand citizens. The first speaker had completed his address. Other speakers, including Arthur Evans, were close to the truck which served as a platform. A strike leader then made an appeal for funds to feed and care for the men. Out of a clear sky, without provocation or warning, the police swept on the meeting. Naturally panic and disorder reigned. The police clubbed the crowd composed of men, women and children, burst tear gas bombs and dispersed the audience in all directions. Evans and Black, who was acting as chairman, were seized at once. Many were injured by police clubs and gassed with the tear gas bombs. The strikers have made themselves clear in the press on their position as to the death of Detective Millar. Every Canadian citizen has the right to protect himself and they cannot be held responsible for a death in a riot for which they were not responsible. The responsibility for the death of Millar rests squarely upon the shoulders of the authorities.

The strikers scattered in all directions and received orders to return as quickly as possible to the Stadium, but they were driven down Eleventh Avenue by the various bodies of police who were stationed at other intersections. Forming up on Eleventh Avenue, the boys proceeded to march in their usual fashion down the street. Mounted police rode them down from both ends, again scattering them. In desperation they blocked the streets with parked cars, picked up chance missiles such as rocks and bricks, as a matter of fact any weapon which was to hand to protect themselves against the brutal and unwarranted attack of the police. They were bottled in the down town section, disorganized by the repeated charges of the police. They had no choice but to fight back, and this they did bravely in the face of tear gas bombs, base ball bats, billies and axe handles, and later, guns with real bullets in them.

All of these things were done in the down town area. Citizens were pushed and crowded into door ways. Squadrons of police rode on their horses on the sidewalks crowding people up against walls. They proved to be no respecters of persons. Regina was treated to a real dose of police terrorism.

We saw them clubbing unarmed strikers like vicious animals, tearing them out of the crowd and hustling them in a very rough manner into custody. The people of Regina are now under no illusions as to the extent to which forces of state will go in spite of the fact that these men are asking only for the right to live like human beings. It matters not whom they kill or wound in the process, they are determined at all costs to force the single unemployed young men of this country to accept a wretched condition in the camps.

The streets were a shambles. For three hours the riot continued. It was the direct responsibility of the authorities provoked and continued by them. The strikers were forced to protect themselves with what immediate weapons they could find. In the struggle, private property was damaged. We would point out, however, that it could quite as easily have been damaged by the police as by the strikers.

The streets were mopped up and the remaining 1200 strikers who had not been down town to take part in the riot were 'cooped' in the Stadium. Although they were allowed the full extent of the grounds on the following day, they went without food until pressure was brought upon the authorities to feed them.

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

The object of this leaflet is to explain the true situation to the citizens of Regina and to rectify many false conclusions which have been drawn, most notable of which was that the meeting was illegal and therefore the police were within their rights, but Commissioner Wood's statement the morning following the riot proves this to be wrong. He claims (after all the damage and injury in the streets had taken place) that their only object was to arrest the leaders. In addition, the Hon. Hugh Guthrie also states that there has been no ban upon the giving of food or assistance to the strikers. It is common knowledge, however, that any of the strike leaders could have been arrested on the street or about the city at any time. They were on delegations to the Provincial Govern-

ment, walking about and eating in the restaurants and made no secret of their whereabouts.

Further when one considers that on the morning and afternoon of July 1st, the day of the riot, the strike committee WAS NEGOTIATING with the Federal and Provincial Governments for a peaceful settlement and that the strikers stated their willingness to return whence they had come and discontinue their march, it appears that the whole riot was pre-arranged by the Federal authorities and that Bennett did not wish a peaceful settlement in spite of the efforts of the strikers to that end. The Provincial Government agreed in principle with the proposal to disband. However, while this body was in session to discuss details, the federal and city police provoked an attack on the citizens and strikers. If the police had not attacked, it is certain that all the strikers would be on their way back without trouble. These boys did not organize this march for the purpose of overthrowing the government, but merely wished to demonstrate that they had grievances and to bring pressure on the government for redress. The agreement made now to transport the strikers by special train could have been carried out before the blood bath in the Regina streets.

Against such measures as the alleged Emergency Order-In-Council and Section 98 the whole working class and all freedom loving people must unite. The application of Section 98 to prohibit the Relief Camp Workers Union is an attempt to outlaw the Trade Union Movement of Canada.

Now is the time to defend ourselves against these infringements. Today, although they justify them under the cloak of suppressing Communism, it is a direct attack against the whole labor and farmer movements throughout Canada, and will continue and progress unless you organize yourselves against outlawing the trade union movements and against suppression of the democratic rights of the workers; organize for the repeal of Section 98; organize for the unconditional release of the strikers arrested; organize for the repeal of all warrants against strikers and other workers. Help the Citizens' Emergency Committee with money to carry out the defence of these workers. Pass resolutions at the meetings of your organizations protesting against the action of the Bennett Government.

The evening of riot and disorder will remain long in the minds of the citizens of Regina. They have been duped by legal complications, their minds have been played upon by improper news. Every agency has been exercised to turn them against the Relief Camp Strikers. We appeal to them as the Citizens' Emergency Committee, in an unbiased and thoroughly sincere manner, to consider these facts and draw their own conclusions.

*Issued by the Regina Citizens' Emergency Committee, 406a and 409 Kerr Bldg.,
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